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ABUSES OF THE IMAGINATION.

A

BACCALAUREATE DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT

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JULY 15, 1866.

BY ASA D. SMITH,
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DISCOURSE.

ROMANS 1: 21.

“BUT BECAME VAIN IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS.”

FOR the truly Christian student, intent upon the highest self-culture, it is not enough that any science be mastered — above all, the science of mind — in its merely intellectual aspects. He seeks to know himself, that he may govern, in a moral sense, and so duly exalt himself. He cons every faculty within him, from perception, in its lowly office, watching at every gateway of sense, up to reason, with its eagle eye and its heavenward flight, that he may “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” And the more important any faculty, the more marvellous and potent in its operations, the more helpful or hurtful in its possible relations to his spiritual well-being, the more carefully does he consider those relations, the more diligently does he inquire for the good to be attained or the evil to be shunned.

Of great moment, in this view, is the particular power suggested by the text. I say suggested; for I have not been so careless of the Greek original as not to know, that the *διαλογισμοι* there spoken of may be taken in a very broad sense. The word may in-

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clude, doubtless, all thoughts, reasonings, theories, opinions, doctrines. Yet a glance at the context, as well as the history of the nations referred to, shows that the imagination is largely if not mainly intended. How in all heathendom was that perverted and debased, and what a perverting and debasing power was it. In the very next sentence, we have its crowning feat, the changing of "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things." Well might it be prominent in the Apostle's thought — in the substance and scope of it, we say not in any nicely metaphysical view. And well may it be prominent in ours. As to both time and space, how illimitable is it, glancing "from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," possessing that whole threefold sphere of intellection, the past, the present and the future. Other powers are simply cognitive, taking things as they are, adding not a cubit to their stature, making not a hair white or black. The imagination is creative. Pre-eminently, in this regard, it assimilates us to the Infinite. As he forms actual worlds, so does it fashion ideal ones. As out of chaos he shaped this goodly frame of nature, so out of pre-existing materials, such as thought and feeling have produced, and such as recollection reproduces, it moulds to its own liking innumerable fabrics of beauty or deformity. Like God, too, it re-creates. It touches with new tints memory's pic-

tures of the past. It throws its own veil of gloom or of glory over the present, transforming, for better or for worse, whatever it looks on. It shapes and peoples, too, the future ; and it fills the deep abysses and the lofty heights and all the far-off regions of the universe — dark solitudes to the eye of reason — with forms and facts and scenes suited to its own moods. Nor is it of a specialty we speak ; but, as it pertains to human nature, of a common endowment. Though in different degrees, it is mighty in all, from the peasant to the poet, from the child with his marvellous nursery stories — some of them, in all their simplicity, embracing great principles and profound philosophies — to the old man eloquent. This faculty is the more important in a Christian view from the fact, variously hinted already, of its intimate relations to the affectional and moral nature. It is a sort of internuncius or mediator between the sensuous and the spiritual, moulding the former by the force of the great and all-pervading intuitions, and bearing back mighty embodiments. It works at the bidding of the heart, with a plastic power which that largely furnishes, and with a potent reaction, the reflux tide being greater than even the outflow. Of all our intellectual faculties, not one can be compared with it for subtilty and power, whether as a minister of sin, or a helper of holiness. Nay, creeds have come of it — philosophies and theologies of world-wide notoriety.

It will not seem strange that, on such an occasion and in such a presence, a faculty so related should form the subject of discourse. While we shall find in it profitable lessons for every hearer, it is of special interest to the young, and to those, above all, who, in the spirit of true scholarship, are endeavoring to make the most of their whole intellectual being. Let me speak, then — making the darker views prominent, that the brighter may be the better appreciated — of the ABUSES OF THE IMAGINATION. I shall take notice, in what I trust will prove an exhaustive method, of its *defilements*, its *excesses*, and its *usurpations*.

We are to consider, first, its *defilements*. Alas that, by reason of the great lapse, we must present such a power in such an aspect. It was designed by the Creator not to pollute the fair inner world, but to beautify — to make it more and more like the Eden without. Not only the notes of birds were to be heard there, and the sound of gentle zephyrs, and of musically flowing rivers, but angelic voices, and even the voice of the Lord God himself, walking not in anger but in love amid the trees of the garden. But sin entered, making imagination its handmaid, and the harpies followed — nay, the fiends. Over the fairest flowerets was seen the trail of the serpent. There was blasting and mildew and all loathsomeness, for beauty. As heaven's own galleries, to change the figure, God designed the

chambers of the soul. They were to be hung with pictures of exquisite finish, embodiments of reason's great ideals ; such pictures as should not only thrill but purify the heart, calling forth high aspiration and mighty endeavor. Given over to a perverted imagination, they are as the very galleries of the pit — a pandemonium of art. To enter is to be in peril — to gaze is to be lost !

Do we exaggerate, or are these the words of truth and soberness ? Bear in mind the almost invariable process of temptation. The heart seldom yields on a bare suggestion. True, there are some superserviceable devotees of evil, so hackneyed in all its forms, that, more senseless than the fishes, they are content with the bare hook. It requires no glittering fancy to catch them. They are the devil's volunteers, serving without pay. But ordinarily there must not only be a motive, it must be attractively imaged. There must be, for the fullest effect, pictorial illustration. Especially is it so where habits of virtue are not wholly uprooted. Suppose now a case of this sort. Quietly steals over the soul the hint of evil. " Here is unlawful gain to be got ;" or " Here is distinction to be basely won ;" or, " Here is forbidden pleasure to be enjoyed." The object proposed is only in the outline, too shadowy to overcome the lingering sense of sin and its consequences. But now intervenes a partially debauched imagination, producing her private album — as, in

a literal sense, bad pictures are sometimes slyly brought forth. "See here," she says, "the houses, the lands, the purple and fine linen, the social consequence, the varied enjoyments that the proffered gold will secure." "See here the civic eminence to be gained, the robe of office, the chair of State, the obsequious crowd." "See here, as I have limned it, the gay revel and the still more voluptuous scene." Desire, faint before, is kindled now — the tinder, so skillfully supplied, burns apace. So the devil's pictures, aided by the blushing apple, won our mother Eve. So wrought upon the fancy of Achan, the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment. So, first by covetous and then by remorseful and desperate imaginings — for when the bright pictures have done their work, the dark are apt to follow — was Judas hurried to his own place. So is the work of moral ruin constantly accomplished.

What now if the imagination be not partially, but altogether defiled and defiling? A wonderful painter is it — the oldest master the world knows. A busy worker, too, able to say, with truth, "Nulla dies, sine linea." At home and abroad, in business and in leisure, by day and by night, even in dreams, the work goes on. With touch upon touch, with picture upon picture, all ministering to evil, the halls of fancy are covered and crowded. Many a man's mind, if you could but enter it, would seem to you like some of the chambers in buried Hercu-

lanicum, or like such art galleries as one might have looked for in the cities of the plain. Were he turned inside out, all good souls would flee from him, as from some odious and noxious thing. It is a wonder, in such cases, that the pent up evil breaks not out more frequently ; it would, but for the various restraints of a Christian civilization. Even with these, forced as the soul is to commune with itself, compelled to gaze upon all polluting portraitures, and delighting in them, it must needs grow worse and worse, and be more and more at the mercy of every opportune temptation. The evil is the greater from the fact, that these pictures, especially in the youthful mind, are painted in fast colors. They are held to its walls by rivets of steel. Even when grace gains the victory, they hang there still. The bitterest tears of penitence efface them not utterly. By stern resolve, the gaze of the soul may be mainly averted ; yet there is a fascination about them like that of the serpent's eye — there will be furtive glances still. And their whole history, down to old age, assures us, that a young man can bear out into life no greater blessing than a sanctified imagination, no greater curse than an imagination defiled.

We pass, next, to consider what we have termed the *excesses* of the imagination. With this faculty, as with every other, while there are errors in kind — things essentially wrong, and so hurtful ever — there are sins, also, of degree. It may be exercised

about innocent things, and in innocent methods, yet in a disproportion no less injurious morally and spiritually, than intellectually. Not that we would reduce it ever to a timid and craven mood. We would nurture and cherish it rather. We would unloose its pinions, and bid it plume them for the loftiest allowable flight. This is only to repeat what we have before virtually said. Happy he, in whom within due limits, and under the sanctifying influence of the Divine Spirit, it has the fullest development. It is a thing of joy forever. It strews the homeliest ways of life with flowers, and wakens sweet music in the desert places. It adds, incalculably, in its analogies, and types, and symbols, and grand ideals, in the new worlds it discovers or creates, to our intellectual wealth. And more than all, to a man of benevolent purpose, it is a power for good. How have the poets of all ages — those, I mean, who have been true to their calling — beguiled earth of its woes. To the tongue of the eloquent, imagination lends the chief witchery. Dry abstractions have little influence over the heart, and even the judgment is seldom won by bare syllogisms. What, for example, had Luther been as a reformer, but for that marvellous imagination, which could transmute the mists of despondency into a palpable and visible devil, which could transform the castle of Wartburg into a Patmos, and interpret the bird-notes that floated around it into hymns of praise,

and lessons of heavenly wisdom? It is in human nature to be moved mainly by concretions. The child is father of the man, in this as in other respects, that the man as well as the child delights in pictures. Would that this were better understood by some who hold forth, and in many points worthily, the word of life. How often do you say inly, what you scarce dare utter, "Oh, that the preacher, so excellent in other respects, would give us a simile or a metaphor now and then! Oh, that upon the landscape of his discourse there were a few green leaves of fancy, a little horticulture of the imagination." The sermons of some of us are very much like the earth at a certain stage of the demiurgic process. There is no heresy. There are plain statements and clear distinctions enough. The "waters under the firmament" are divided from the "waters above the firmament," and the "waters under the heaven" are "gathered together unto one place," and the "dry land appears" in its proper identity and integrity. For all this you are duly thankful. But as yet there is no grass upon the earth, no "herb yielding seed," no "fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind." However rotund the argument, a certain crowning grace is lacking, and so a culminating power.

But while large scope is due to the imagination, you owe it also certain restraints. First of all, the balance of the powers is to be maintained. This par-

ticular faculty is not to be so exclusively cultivated, as to disparage or dwarf the judgment, or enfeeble the logical processes. These, as we have said, are not all, but they are much — they are fundamental. It is a Christian duty so to regard them ; for we may not innocently derange the complex intellectual machinery which God has so wisely adjusted. However beautiful the garniture of the hills, it supersedes not, but rather demands the underlying granite. Yet how often is this overlooked — in this age, especially, of much light literature, and as Carlyle has not inaptly represented it, of much frothy talk. And what injury has been done thus to religion as well as letters ! How many Christian students are there, so called, who in rearing the Mount Washington which their ambition pictures, essay no upheaval of huge rocky strata, but think to substitute for the eternal pillars, a wire network of æsthetics. They get no hard lessons ; that were dry and dull, and unbecoming their genius — but they *read*. They eschew mathematics and metaphysics, that they may give themselves to poetry — that they may write verses, perhaps. With Webster and Choate in their eye — yet with a singular misapprehension of such examples — they cultivate eloquence ; forgetting that, by and by, when the world opens its expectant ear, for lack of solid things to say, and the high mental discipline wherewith to say them, the upshot of their speech shall

be like that of the swift-footed Ahimaaz — “ I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.” It is fitting that the pulpit as well as the lecture room should rebuke such a waste of talents divinely bestowed — a waste as harmful, in the issue, to the æsthetic nature, as it is to the powers so culpably neglected. And it were well if the whole community could be effectually warned, prone as multitudes are to substitute for a more substantial mental aliment, the merest frost-work and syllabub of romance ; prone as even the religious caterers to youthful curiosity are to dilute all fact into semi-sensational fiction, to make all religious teaching a sort of “ Arabian Nights’ Entertainment.”

There are excesses of the imagination, also, in relation to the sensibilities. That these are dulled by familiarity with their appropriate objects — especially when they work to no practical issue — hardly need be said. It is patent to all observation and all consciousness. So harden into steel the nerves of the warrior on the battle-field, the surgeon in the hospital, the philanthropist amid the horrors of destitution and degradation. Yet here *are* practical issues ; beneath all the surface-ripples of emotion, and when you have only a sea of glass, you have the groundswell of principle. And we have further compensation in the law of habit. With its grooves, and the steady propulsion of a sanctified will, you look confidently for an onward movement. But suppose the

mind occupied only with unreal miseries ; suppose that turning from the hard and unattractive facts of want and of woe — facts not to be reached before the cosy fire of a pleasant parlor, over the last new novel — it enjoys the luxury of tears at the mere romance of suffering. In the very flow of these tears, there is a petrifying process. They may start again and again, though with an ever increasing demand for lachrymal excitements ; and self-complacency may be engendered, as if actual wants had been contemplated, and there had been sacrifices instead of self-solaces. Yet there shall be less and less disposition to confront the real exigences of humanity, and a fainter and fainter response to every call for active benevolence. Better that imagination lie dormant, and conscience only be appealed to,—better depend on the barest statistical arguments, looking for no touches of sentiment, — than trust to the goodness engendered and sustained by an all-absorbing fancy.

Another error of the imagination, of the same general sort, and the last we shall mention, is in the line of castle-building. Let there be no misapprehension here. We say not that aspiration is to be held in doubt. It is essential to all high achievement ; and we are bound to it not only by God's commands, but, as we have already shown, by the nature he has given us. We are not forbidden, surely, to contemplate lofty ideals ; we have affirm-

ed, and may well reaffirm the very opposite. They are the object of all true aspiration. They move perpetually before all the nobler spirits of our race, illuminating their darkness, cheering their toil, making the rough places smooth, and so energizing their whole being, that mountain barriers become as hillocks. A blessed thing it is that we are not only made capable of apprehending perfection, but incapable, if true to ourselves, of being content with any thing short of it. From the depths of our souls comes that excelsior cry, which one of our own poets has made a household word. Nor would we forbid a proper concern for the morrow, or the laying, with all submissiveness, of a wise life-plan. It was something else the ingenuous and earnest Frederick Robertson had in view, when he entered in his note-book the resolve, "To try to overcome castle-building."

We mean by it the perpetual framing of airy fancies as to the future — vain fancies, in that they are either the embodiment of inordinate affections, or without any basis of reasonable probability — day-dreams, in which the soul not only becomes oblivious of the present, but loses in a measure its disposition and its power to grapple with life's stern realities. We might speak, under this head, of visionary *fears*, castles of Giant Despair, built gratuitously and tenanted prematurely, till the plight of the poor occupants is not unlike that of the pilgrims in Bunyan's

allegory. But we have in mind chiefly those fantastic *hopes*, which are sure to end in bitter disappointment, if not in a moody, despondent and repining temper. How often do we meet these men of great expectations but scanty achievement — always

“ About to live,

Forever on the brink of being born.”

Many a student passes through his whole academic course with a sad listlessness and inefficiency for the present, yet with a near vision ever—in the next year, or the very next term — of something worthier. How fair the picture of himself and his surroundings which soothes his conscience and comforts his indolence. It is not exactly a castle he sees, but it is a quiet study, with his own form as the central figure, bending, by the midnight lamp, over the lesson that absorbs him. It is not now — but it is just at hand. He will do better, aye brilliantly soon. How easily does imagination, the enchantress, change the record of his recitations, his position in the class, his performance on the platform, his consequent entrance upon the busy world. Instead of the laggard of his consciousness, he sees only the successful scholar of his illusory fancy. And so he dreams and dawdles on. Many a professional man has wasted a life time in like manner. And, passing to the spiritual sphere, many a Christian has forgotten the shortcomings which have grieved his brethren and dishonored his Savior — has mistaken con-

ception for fact and promise for performance, under similar sorceries of an undisciplined imagination.

It remains only that we speak, in the third place, of the *usurpations* of the faculty before us. As in the body, so in the soul, each power, analyze as you may, has its own proper office. And we can only be saved from intellectual confusion and error, as no one trenches upon the sphere of another. Exalted as is our estimate of the imagination, it does a good and glorious work only in its own province. Elsewhere, it is little less than archangel ruined. If it take, as it often does, the place of the logical faculty, if it overlook or contradict the great utterances of reason — above all, if it assume, as many a time in our world's history it has done, to lord it over faith, and so really to exalt itself above all that is called God — you have then the most palpable and fearful of all its abuses. We have only time to consider it in the view last named, its relation to faith, and so to revelation.

Faith apprehends both facts and doctrines. Let us look, first, at the relation of the imagination to the former. Facts are ever the warp, of which fancy forms the woof. We never see, or hear, or read, exactly what is, but partly what we imagine. It is so pre-eminently with the poet, as when Dante, out of the rustic, not to say coarse and unlettered maiden of his early love, formed the angel of the Divine Comedy ; but it is more

or less so with all. So is it especially in the reading of history. The personage of the dryest statement, much more of the most picturesque, moves before us with a minuteness of portraiture which no pen of the ready writer could give. We paint for ourselves the briefly detailed court-scene. We fill up the outline of the battle-field. We sketch to the full the fair landscape of peace. And what happens as to human histories, happens also, and in larger measure, with the divine. No narratives are so suggestive as those of the Bible. None have formed the basis or the germ of so many products of the imagination — so many tales, and poems, and statues, of so many paintings by the old masters and the modern. And within due limits, all this is well. It helps to realize and vivify the dim, the distant and the dead. It annihilates time and space; it brings out verisimilitude; it enhances the power of the sacred volume — it is, indeed, but the out-working of its power. As I read Milton's account of the temptation in Eden and the fall, it seems to me half inspired, so accordant is it both with the divine testimony and with human nature. I have a little of the same feeling as to his narrative of the fall in heaven, always excepting the huge guns, the jests of the apostate angels, and the fight with mountain missiles. With little of Scripture here to guide him, it is not strange that, at some points, the wings of his fancy proved Icarian. It is a remark-

able tribute, I may say in passing, to the many-sided excellence of the Bible, that incomparably the noblest epic in our language is but a filling up of its outline. Who of us at all familiar with poetic literature but has found in other authors not a few, such as Gessner, and Klopstock, and Montgomery, and Hannah Moore, and Mrs. Browning, panoramic illustrations of Scripture which have both charmed and instructed him. Even the wayward genius of Byron helps us to conceive the moody madness of the first fratricide. Time would fail us to speak of the little cabinet pieces — the coloring up of old Bible photographs — which, in writers like Herbert and Cowper and Keble and Willis, meet us at every turn.

But while there is advantage in all this which we would not willingly forego, there is peril also. We tread here on holy ground, and even the poets should walk reverently and carefully. The facts concerned may be distorted or miscolored; the picture may be marred, and not merely completed. The leanings of fancy, as with some who have assayed sacred themes, may be more to "the Aonian Mount," and "the Pierian Spring," than to "Sion hill," or to

"Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God."

Even Milton was, in this regard, scarcely saved, and only by the fact that, with all his high classical culture, revealing itself, at times, in a tedious pedantry,

he was still, as has been well said, in the main-shaping of his mind, a Hebrew. Much greater is the danger, as we pass to literature of a more speculative or didactic sort, to certain grave discussions in which the tendency is to substitute specious imaginings for the simple facts of the divine word. We have no fear, be it observed, of science; let that have free course. Let its votaries bring forth their fossils; only let them be careful that they be not modern ones. Let them study the formations, from the old azoic period down to the present; let them scrutinize the bird-tracks, and the dash of the ancient rain-drops. On our part, we will investigate anew our Hebrew roots and idioms; we will compare Scripture with Scripture, and even correct, if need be, our time-honored exegesis. Our God is a God of knowledge; and we have no fear that the testimony of the rocks, duly understood, will contravene the testimony of their Maker. They will, in the end, confirm it rather. We remember gratefully that for one of the most conclusive of the theistic arguments, we are indebted to the researches of the scientific geologists. But we do deprecate the superseding of inspiration by a prurient fancy, the moulding of the divine word to suit its capricious and fitful moods. We note with pain, for instance, the liberties which the accomplished author of the "Ecce Homo" has taken; and with still deeper condemnation the pretentious and impious romance of Renan and his

school. We need hardly refer to Strauss and his German collaborators, whose theories are so fanciful as almost to carry with them their own antidote. It is not of logic, we insist, such shadowy forms of skepticism are born; they are the offspring of a vain imagination. And we take note of them that we may protest against its usurpations, that we may insist on its retaining reverently its proper place, and so receiving, with all deference and lowliness, whatever God has affirmed. It may illustrate, if it be able, but it must not transmute. We would be mindful of the woe uttered against him who adds to or takes from "the words of the book of this prophecy." And we would rather say, with one of old, "Credo, quia impossibile est," than question a solitary item of the inspired narrative.

Still more disastrously does the imagination play its pranks of usurpation in reference to the doctrines of the Bible. Many of these are so purely spiritual as by no means to be imaged; they are essentially formless. You might as well take a picture of the law of gravitation. Others are so vast, stretching into the sphere of the infinite, that though you may apprehend — and so properly know, whatever Hamilton and his school may say to the contrary — you cannot comprehend them. They mock all effort at configuration. In man's optical apparatus, there is no object-glass large enough to receive them. Yet how often has this been practically overlooked, part-

ly from the pride of science, and partly from the constructive instincts of fancy. Instead of taking things simply on the divine testimony, saying humbly with the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me," how many seek to mould them into cognizable and measurable shapes. They search vainly for the sensuous *how*. How largely the Pagan theology was thus affected, we learn from the context. And we see even in Christendom, and in the speculations of excellent men, like tendencies. The secret of creation, for example, is asked for; and by some philosophic alchemy, hard to explain, it is extracted from the seething chaos; nay, we are led back of chaos, and made to see, even as we note the working of a spinning-jenny, how matter comes of spiritual forces. The doctrine of the Trinity is to be set forth; and not content with the simple averment of the Scriptures, the declaration that it *is*, an explanation is attempted. The self-confident theologian would show *how* it is; and so, logic failing, he resorts to tenuous fancies, thus darkening counsel by words without knowledge. Or, the imagination baffled — baffled because it ventures where angels dare not tread — he gives it a flat denial. To a like impertinence, has the doctrine of the person of Christ, of the mystical union of the two natures, been subjected. "How about the two wills?" fancy asks; and "How about the two consciousnesses?" Conception is at fault, of course,

here again. And so, while the doctrine is sadly perplexed by some, it is scornfully discarded by others. An impious philosopher once said, that if he had had the making of the world, he could have improved upon God's plan ; an unchastened imagination undertakes to improve upon God's doctrines. It may be doubted if the great truth of original sin has been much advantaged by the multifarious speculations even of its friends, from the tree and its branches in the Edwardean hypothesis to the timeless sin-fall of Müller. So of the doctrine of the resurrection. When in Paul's time it was asked, " With what body do they come ?" half in disgust at the inquisitiveness of a presumptuous fancy, the Apostle promptly answered, " Thou fool !" Nor has the great truth of vicarious atonement been untouched. How has speculation followed speculation, as cloud follows cloud across a summer's sky, until now at last the acme is reached, and by a conceit, original only in its completeness and its rhetorical setting, the old doctrine of our fathers has undergone a metamorphosis hardly surpassed in heathen fable. What jewels have been cast into the fire of a perverted imagination, and what copies of the old Aaronic product have come out !

The truth is, there is no injury to sound divinity like that wrought by your poet-theologue, especially when he fancies himself a great metaphysician. And strange as it may seem, this is no uncommon

fancy. Others have been superficial, he thinks, but he has insight. Others have been blear-eyed, and so have held to absurdities and monstrosities; he goes to the heart of things, to the deep foundations. There is no end to his self-conceit. He has fine-spun theories in abundance — spun from the gauzy texture of his own brain, not from the solid and imperishable Divine Word. That is, rather, an afterthought with him. That can hardly be said to be either warp or woof; it merely furnishes a sentence, here and there, to be cunningly broidered into the finished web. He proffers you nice distinctions, ever so many, which he is bold to affirm are the *ultima thule*; and perhaps they are, in the direction he goes. But they amount to little more than those of the meteorologist, as he gives you his curious classification of the clouds — his cirrus, and cumulus, and stratus, and the rest. You have but clouds still, albeit the unpractised eye may sometimes mistake them for solid land. It is sentimentalism and fancy he deals with, not sober and profound logic, much less simple Scripture truth. The Bible is but a waxen substance, on which he impresses at pleasure his preconceived designs. Oh, that such men could be persuaded to keep to their proper vocation, that of setting forth the old and familiar in new and attractive lights. Let them busy themselves to the utmost in all simple and chaste decorations of the great temple of truth. Around every pillar and over

every arch, let them hang, if they will, the beautiful festoons of fancy — the evergreens and the flowers which befit, while they do not hide the fair and noble edifice. But let them not attempt to reconstruct. When, leaving their own important and yet subordinate sphere, they essay the work of the architect — tearing away massive old walls, putting new stones into the foundation, and rearing new columns — then, though they term their work only a fond and faithful restoration, we see upon the glorious old structure only the hand of the spoiler.

But I may not enlarge. We see, in the rapid survey we have taken, that, in respect to the particular power before us, as in our whole complex nature, we are fearfully as well as wonderfully made. We see for what high uses the imagination was designed, and yet what perils cluster about it. We see the need, in this relation, of incessant watchfulness, of a stern resistance of the first incursions of evil, and, above all, of a wise pre-occupancy of the contested territory. Possession, here, is more than “nine points” in the law of our being. The fiends gather not, commonly, where the angels are. Or, if there be an exception, now and then, as when, in the time of Job, Satan made his appearance among the sons of God, Satan shall, nevertheless, be ultimately baffled, and the last days shall be better than the first. I will merely add, omitting many other practical thoughts which the subject naturally suggests, that

our only sure reliance in this matter, is on the help proffered us from above. So subtle and so mighty is the evil to be mastered, so intertwined with every fibre of our being, from the animal susceptibilities up to the sovereign conscience, that if we fight unaided, we fight but to fall. It is only as we repair continually to the Divine Word — that thesaurus of all that is true and praiseworthy, that book of all the human faculties, as well as of God's mind and heart — seeking there both the high culture and the ample furniture which, above all other books, it gives to the imagination; it is only as in the name of Christ, himself the loftiest of ideals, we invoke the efficacious presence of the Spirit of all grace, that Spirit, at whose bidding the phantoms of the pit disappear, and all shapes of purity and nobleness take their place; that we may hope to avoid the great evil to which our text points, and to attain the great good we have put in contrast with it.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS:

Your attention has been called, in the preceding remarks, to a theme not wholly unfamiliar to you. It is embraced, in the outline, as are the rudiments and the seeds of all desirable knowledges, in the curriculum you have just concluded. But I deemed it fitting, that as the last sands of your College life were falling, it should have further development. For you end not self-culture as you leave these halls.

You have only begun to understand the marvellous powers within you, either in the vastness of their scope, or the greatness of their issue. You have only begun to understand the particular faculty on which we have been dwelling. Be it still, then — in its relation to your moral and spiritual welfare, especially — your study and your care. Guard it with unceasing vigilance against all defilement ; and to this end, enrich it with all that is true and beautiful and good. And let all its outgivings, whatever form of influence you wield, be marked by a vestal purity. In private utterances, in public discourse, in the strain of poesy it may be given you to fashion, in the page of romance that may drop from your pen, in editorial utterances, in the ethical theories you may inculcate, as you would not be yourselves contaminated, beware of aught that may contaminate others. Give forth to the world, rather, as ability and opportunity shall serve, in humble imitation of Him at whose fiat the angels of light sprang into being, such pure and beautiful creations, as shall be only ministers of blessing. Let the imagination be kept also from all excesses. Let there be no interference with the proper culture and prominence of the judgment, no deadening of the sensibilities, no fantastic, absorbing, and enervating preoccupation of the future. Let there be no building of air castles, whether of joy or of woe. Above all, let no violence be done either to faith or to revelation. Let the

imagination walk meekly and reverently in the train of Christianity — not as captive monarchs moved of old in the triumphal procession, but with all readiness and gladness. Let it wait lovingly and adoringly on the Master, breaking before him its alabaster box of ointment, laying at his feet, like the Magi, its gold and frankincense and myrrh.

With self-culture like this, and with your eye fixed on the fair ideals which shall beckon you onward and upward, our fondest hopes of your future will here be realized. We are soon to look upon your faces here no more. So far as the lessons of the sanctuary are concerned, our last counsels are falling upon your ears. As the memory of our past intercourse comes over us — so full of all pleasant and endearing sympathies, so brightened, may I not say, with the sweet light of heavenly grace — we cannot forbid a touch of sadness. Yet we will rejoice in the hope of a reunion which shall know no end. The days and the years of our lifetime will soon be passed. One after another, its labors, its cares, its trials and its conflicts will come and go. We shall reach at last that flood which one of your teachers, and two of your own number — at the recollection of whom we drop some natural tears to-day — have already crossed. But I see beyond, helped by the gorgeous imagery of God's word, a city which hath foundations. I see the pearly gates and the street of pure gold, and the river of life, and the tree upon its banks. If we

are Christ's, beloved young men — only if we are Christ's, having in penitence and faith consecrated to him memory, judgment, fancy, our whole intellectual and moral being — we shall enter in through the gates into the city. And then — "I see," did I say? Eye hath not seen — ear hath not heard. There are joys and glories there, to which all the visions of the most ethereal imagination, designed though they were to attract us heavenward, are but as the faint day-break upon our eastern hills, to the brightness of the noon-tide.

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